

ANNIE MENUSKIN

A BLIND GIRL WHO TYPED 300
LETTERS WITHOUT A MISTAKE

Gordon, Carolyn

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

at Providence entered him in a shoe-shining contest in Boston, he carried off the first prize of fifty dollars.

Frank went on shining shoes until he was twenty, when he moved to Philadelphia to look for the opportunity which he had not yet found. Here his persistent job-hunting netted him a place in the little fruit store where he got his idea of opening a shoe-repair shop.

His first shop was near the fruit store, and there he stayed until 1911, when his accumulated profits enabled him to open a larger and more up-to-date establishment on one of the principal business

streets of Philadelphia. This was followed, within twelve months, by another down-town store. In the next several years, three more stores were opened, all of them occupying choice locations in the heart of the city. The five-story building which houses one of them is owned by Capotosto's company. It is devoted entirely to shoe repairing.

Frank Capotosto's business career is based upon two very simple principles: the first is the rendering of an exceptional service; the second is telling the world about it. Mr. Capotosto was early converted to a belief in the advantages of ad-

vertising. His stores are kept attractive and inviting. That is in itself an excellent piece of advertising. He uses a trademark which is prominently displayed on all his stationery, leaflets, folders, and other printed matter. In addition, he regularly places large advertisements in the local newspapers.

In 1906, Capotosto sent for his childhood sweetheart from his old home in Italy and married her. They have two sons and two daughters, all going to school, and all members of the Boy or the Girl Scouts. The whole family is much interested in civic movements.

JOHN A. KUDER

A Blind Girl Who Typed 300 Letters Without a Mistake

ANNIE MENUSKIN is known in Chattanooga, Tennessee, as the typist who never makes a mistake.

"I can't afford to make errors," she explains. "People who have their sight can always go back and check up on their work. I can't do that, so my work has to be correct from the start."

Despite the fact that she is totally blind, Miss Menuskin has for several years served as a public typist in the Grand Hotel, at Chattanooga, filling her post to the satisfaction both of the hotel management and of her patrons. All of her work is remarkable for its accuracy. On one occasion, she wrote three hundred circular letters without making a single mistake, and part of the time she was writing at the rate of thirty-six circulars an hour.

"Often I have funny experiences with the traveling men who come to my desk to dictate letters," laughed Miss Menuskin. "Frequently I finish their work before they find I can't see. They wouldn't discover it then if they didn't ask me to read a letter, or to do something like that."

Annie Menuskin has been working all her life to overcome the handicap of total blindness. Today, at twenty-seven years of age, she is self-sustaining. Besides her work, she has a number of active interests, the chief of which is music. She believes that a blind person can be both useful and happy.

When she was six years old, she was sent to Nashville, to the Tennessee School for the Blind. During her twelve years' stay there, she completed the work of the grammar grades and a four-year high school course, as well as nine years' training in instrumental music. She was graduated in 1915. The next few years were spent in studying music at the Cadek

Conservatory, and at the Chattanooga School of Music.

Miss Menuskin didn't plan to be a typist. "When I left school, I wanted to be a professional musician. But I knew I had to make my living. I decided I'd study typewriting, because a good typist can always get work. It took me five or six months to learn the touch system on the typewriter and, of course, it took me longer to master general office training than it did the other girls; but I finished the course in nine months.

"Naturally, there were many difficulties, but I found I could usually get around

"Fortunately, most of my patrons prefer to use the dictaphone, or to dictate direct to the machine. Fifty words a minute is the fastest dictation I've ever taken, and that was direct to the machine. But I don't believe many men think faster than that."

Every movement Miss Menuskin makes is governed by system.

"I believe that a blind typist can handle office work as well as anyone," she said. "But of course she must use her head more. See there,"—she opened a drawer in her desk. "The way I manage is by having a place for everything, and by always keeping everything in its place.

"I keep my hotel paper here, with the second sheets just under it. In the drawer below, I keep the paper I use for the public; below that, the paper for my own personal use. And I never get them mixed.

"When they bring me a package of hotel paper I put it in the drawer, with the letterheads toward me. I always keep it in the same position. Then, when I take a sheet of paper out and put it in the machine, I know it's right side up. After I put it in, I space up eighteen times. I have the tabulator on my machine set at 15; I stop it at 35. That gives me the correct position for my date line. I al-

ways do these things exactly the same way, so there isn't much likelihood of a mistake.

"There are more differences in the feel of two sheets of paper than you'd suppose. Why, no two envelopes that come to my desk are exactly alike. Now, this"—she opened a drawer, ran her hand over a pile of letters, and finally extracted one—"is a letter from a traveling man, telling me he liked my work. As soon as my fingers touch it, I know it, because it has a little rough place in one corner of the envelope."

CAROLYN GORDON



PHOTO BY JUDD

Miss Annie Menuskin, the blind public typist at the Grand Hotel, Chattanooga, Tennessee, recording dictation directly on her typewriter. Sometimes, she says, strangers don't even know she is blind until they ask her to read something they have dictated. In addition to her typing, Miss Menuskin, for her own pleasure, is a student of music

them some way. The really hard part came in making other people, especially prospective employers, believe I could do things. After I had finished the course, I had to hang around the business college several months trying to keep up my speed—and my courage—before I got a job.

"Stenographers are always asking me how I manage about taking dictation. I use the dictaphone mostly. Nobody has ever worked out a Braille system of shorthand, so I have to make my own contractions.

"store" food for the bird community.

All the stores are of the self-serve variety. When supplies run low, the Bird Man sees that they are replenished.

Recent civic improvements include public flower gardens and a community swimming pool, plainly labeled "Bird Bath." Like all swimming pools, the one in Birdville is most patronized on hot, sultry afternoons and evenings in the latter part of July and in August. Then it is that gay colors fleck the pool, as red-birds, wrens, titmice, canaries, and flickers flit here and there. Within a single hour one afternoon last summer, Mr. Hunt observed eighty-nine birds of twenty-one different kinds dip in the pool.

In the summer, when the flowers are blooming and the mother birds are sitting

on their nests with only their heads peeping out the open doors, the village is very beautiful. Deep red cockscombs, taller than little children, reach up to the bird houses and invite the patient mother birds to come out and sway back and forth in the faint breezes.

From morning until night, Birdville is a-flutter with business and pleasure. Getting food, picking flowers, visiting from house to house, or dipping into the cool waters of the swimming pool. At night lines of birds gather along the branches of the trees and sing or twitter until darkness tells them it is time to go into their homes.

That many of the same birds return annually is proof that they like Birdville. Some families have occupied the

same house for two successive years. A bluebird has resided in the same house for three years and has returned to the village on the same date in two of these years.

One can learn more about birds in a trip through Birdville with the Bird Man as a guide than he can in the study of many books on the subject of ornithology, for in his work for the birds Mr. Hunt has learned as much about them as he has learned from them.

The Bird Man has turned his loneliness into happiness, and this happiness he shares freely with all the neighbor children and with any traveler who cares to hear the birds sing. And the songsters of Birdville never lack an audience.

EMMA MILLS

A Shoe-Repair Man Who Sends for His Customers' Footwear

EIGHTEEN years ago Frank Capotosto, an Italian immigrant boy twenty years of age, had a job in a fruit store in Philadelphia. The store was not big and

Frank's position in it was a minor one. His pay was small, and his opportunities for advancement appeared even smaller.

Most people, looking over the field in that neighborhood, would have said that the chance of starting a fortune there was slim indeed. But Capotosto found a neglected opportunity, and with characteristic initiative and energy he made the most of it. As he saw the situation, a fortune was being literally trodden underfoot by unthinking people.

A number of customers coming into the fruit store had asked him where they could find a good shoe-repair shop. There was none in the neighborhood, and it occurred to Capotosto that it would be a good idea to start one. He scraped together a little capital, hired a skillful repair man to help him, and opened a shop.

So far, his establishment differed very little from that of any other cobbler. But Capotosto knew that the average man procrastinates more about taking his shoes to be mended than about anything else. He generally puts it off until the footwear, which a few stitches in time would have made serviceable, is thrown away. In view of this fact, Capotosto decided to try an experiment by *sending* for the shoes. Then the business began to grow rapidly. Closets disgorged forgotten stores of worn shoes, and on every pair Capotosto made his profit.

To-day, Capotosto has one of the

largest shoe-repair businesses in the city. There are five Capotosto stores, whose gross annual income amounts to a quarter of a million dollars. These stores employ seventy-five repair men, who mend

for a job before the shoes leave your house. If you want low shoes made from high ones, light shoes dyed a darker color, suede, kid, satin, gold, or silver shoes renewed, or a certain type of shoe made

into sports shoes by the addition of special soles and heels, you can safely entrust the job to one of his shops.

If you want hose, arch supports, polish, gaiters, heel cushions, bunion pads, shoe stretchers—in fact, anything you require for your feet—you need go no farther than the Capa Shoe Service, Incorporated, the name of his organization.

Frank Capotosto's experience is a splendid example of what America offers to the right kind of immigrant. He was born in Itri, a small town forty miles north of Naples, Italy, and came to America when he was twelve years old.

One of the first things he did upon arriving in New York was to enroll for a course in night school. He had to have a job during the day. His teacher happened to know that a bootblack was needed in the hotel where she lived. She recommended Frank to the hotel management, and he got the job. For several years, the boy continued to shine shoes at this hotel during the day, and attend school in the evening. Then he went to Providence, Rhode Island, and got a place in a shoe-shining parlor on Market Square.

Now, to most folks, shining shoes is not an inspiring vocation. Many boys would have been content to "get by" and let it go at that. But Capotosto thought that so long as he was a bootblack, he might as well be a good one. So skillful did he become that when his boss



Frank Capotosto, who twenty years ago was a hustling young bootblack, is now head of five large shoe-repair shops in Philadelphia. He doesn't wait for his customers to bring their shoes to him; he sends men out to collect them. His shops mend 800 pairs of shoes a day. Mr. Capotosto was born in Italy thirty-eight years ago

eight hundred pairs of shoes every day.

There are many ways in which the service he gives is exceptional. For one thing, shoes are called for and delivered promptly at a specified time. For another, you are told what the price will be

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AUTHOR

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